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ROBERT HALL:

HIS GENIUS AND HIS WRITINGS.

BY

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ROBERT HALL HISGEN

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following paper was read as the last of a series of lectures delivered by gentlemen of the town and county, by desire of the members of the "Leicester Early Closing Association," on Tuesday, March 28, before a large and most respectable assembly. It is published, by request, and in the hope on the part of the writer that it may serve to awaken grateful recollections in the breasts of some, and to convey correct ideas to the minds of others, respecting the distinguished man to whom it relates.

Leicester, April 13, 1854.

ROBERT HALL.

THE ancestors of the late ROBERT HALL were natives of Northumberland, from which county his father withdrew to the village of Arnsby, in this immediate vicinity, in 1753. Eleven years after this date, in 1764, the subject of this sketch was born, and at six years of age was sent as a day scholar to a Mr. Simmons, of Wigston. The man blossomed in the child, in a love of books and a thirst for knowledge, which soon carried him beyond his teacher's reach, who wrote to his father and requested his removal, stating "that he was quite unable to keep pace with his pupil." He was removed at the age of eleven to the care of the Rev. John Ryland, of Northampton, and when he had attained to fifteen he went to Bristol College, and in 1781 removed to Aberdeen. Having completed his studies in the northern university, he returned to Bristol, where for about five years he combined the offices of tutor and pastor. In 1790 he removed to Cambridge. It was during his residence in that city, that the malady overtook him, under which, for a short time, his faculties suffered

an eclipse. In the year 1808 he became a resident in this town, and after the lapse of eighteen years withdrew, amidst universal regret, to the scene of his earlier labors. After living in Bristol about five years, he died. His remains have been removed within the last few weeks from their first resting place to the cemetery of the city, and a public monument, by the consent of the family, is in the course of erection to his memory.

Definitions are always difficult and sometimes dangerous. This especially applies to genius, a word with which more liberties have been taken than with any other I know. We hear of mechanical, metaphysical, mathematical, military genius, as though an aptness in either of these departments might not exist perfectly independently of it. It has been predicated of Chantrey's statues, Claude's pictures, Garrick's acting, and even of Taglioni's dancing, as well as of the poetry of Shakespeare and the oratory of Burke; while occasionally there figures among us, according to conventional phraseology, a universal genius. To catch this Protean thing, and to make it sit for its likeness, to give it individuality of feature and distinctiveness of outline, is doubtless no very easy thing, and yet to leave it floating before our minds like a sunny vapor, as changeful as it is beautiful, would not aid to any useful purpose the lucubrations of the evening. As is usually the case where any real difficulty occurs, lexicographers afford us but little help. It frequently happens in their attempts at definitions, that one of them starts with a most unsatisfactory solution, and that all the rest pertinaciously follow. As their explanations in the present instance are multiform and even contradictory, we may be excused for passing them by.

The word was used by the ancients and is employed by modern writers to designate some ideal protecting or presiding power.

“ There is none but he
Whose being I do fear ; and under him
My *genius* is rebuked ; as it's said,
Antony's was by Cæsar.”—*Macbeth*.

“ And as I awake, sweet music breathe,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good
Or the unseen *genius* of the world.”—*Milton*.

“ And the tame demon that should guard my throne,
Shrinks at a *genius* greater than his own.”—*Dryden*.

These conceptions of imaginary powers which either for evil or for good direct the courses and color the destinies of men, are themselves but the emanations of genius—the shapes of a vivid fancy mirrored from the sky. Poetry first makes its gods and then falls down and worships them. But the estimate of sober philosophy itself gives to genius, as it resides among us, an ethereal quality ; it is constrained to regard it as a glorious endowment—as a select beam from the Infinite mind falling here and there on favored spirits. Rightly understood, it appears to me to be brilliancy of mind ; a soul on fire ; an intensification of the mental faculties. If this be deemed too vague and general and something more precise be required, it may be defined as an intense development of the inventive and the æsthetical powers—of imagination and of taste.

Whatever it may be it is an original possession ; if it be somewhat difficult to define it, it is utterly impossible to acquire it. There are scarcely any assignable limits to the stores of knowledge which are placed within our reach. History and Art and Science spread their exhaustless treasures at our feet and wait to repay with promptitude the efforts of industry and research. By reading, observation, study and

reflection, we may accumulate and appropriate riches compared with which the gold of Cræsus was but glittering dust. But the human mind, with all its acquisitive powers, must observe primary laws. It cannot scale the fences which constitutional distinctions throw around it, nor neglect the idiosyncrasies which may distinguish it. Nature, not Art, provided the granite which built up a Goethe and a Bacon, and supplied the celestial spark which blazed forth into a Homer and a Dante. The pelican, with his drowsy wing and cumbrous form, in vain attempts to emulate the eagle with his soaring pinion and his heavenward flight. The useful cob on which the huntsman rides to cover, groom him as you will, can never be mistaken for the high-mettled steed. The peasant as he guides his plough, or whistles by his team, in vain attempts to pour the song of the Ettrick Shepherd, or of the still more favored Scottish Bard. Knowledge may be acquired, genius must be possessed.

It is the province of genius to lead, not to follow ; to create, not to copy. The imitative arts, taking nature as their mistress, have constructed for themselves their imperishable models ; standards of excellence, raised by master hands, and instinct with a life which genius alone could convey. Before these, as subjects of careful study, the diligent and ardent student sits, drinking in their inspiration and seeking to catch their charm. As long as sculpture peoples with its breathing forms the realms of art, the names of Phidias, Praxiteles, Polycletus, and Lysippus must be illustrious. While painting, with its outstretched canvass, lives to captivate and elevate by its graces and its grandeurs, a Raphael, a Titian, and a Turner will fill their well-earned thrones. While music, the soul of nature, abides among us with her matchless power and harmonious numbers, Mozart, Beethoven, and Handel will fill the souls of men with wonder and delight. As long as

eloquence, the winged messenger of thought, has power to subdue, to convince and to persuade, to awaken invincible courage, to inspire with ardent patriotism, or to nerve our feeble nature to high moral deeds, so long will Demosthenes and Cicero be read by our schoolmen and studied by our senators. Thousands may imitate but none can rival. Only now and then will there arise from the mysterious womb of time, a distinguished creature, to merit a like apotheosis—to ascend by common consent in his aerial chariot to take his place among these sublunary gods. The imitative faculty is common, the creative power is rare.

Genius delights in the spirit rather than in the forms of things. Whilst the geometrician occupies himself in measuring the surface of the earth, and the geographer in tracing its continents and its islands, its lakes and its seas; whilst the statistician is numbering its inhabitants, and settling to a nicety the proportion of its births to its deaths; whilst the diligent financier is watching the Parisian bourse and the English funds, and is calculating to a farthing the value of Spanish or of Russian bonds, or the mere astronomer is measuring the size of the stars and computing their relative distances—the man of genius is sympathising with the beautiful, the grand and the sublime, in the vast scene around him. He listens with exquisite emotion to the murmurs of the rivulet, or with solemn awe to the music of the spheres. He revels in the sunny glade as it revives beneath the footsteps of the mystic spring, or contemplates in pensive mood the decay of nature, as she lays aside her gorgeous mantle and descends for a season to her icy tomb. He sings with Wordsworth

“ Sweet is the lore which nature brings ;
 Our meddling intellect
 Misshapes the beauteous forms of things :
 We murder to dissect.”

Or with Coleridge at the foot of Mont Blanc,

“Thou Kingly spirit throned among the hills,
Thou dread ambassador from earth to heaven,
Great Hierarch ! tell thou the silent sky,
And tell the stars, and tell the rising sun,
Earth with her thousand voices praises God !”

One can easily imagine some respectable matter of fact friend accompanying the poet and while listening to his descant on the ample verdure, which, like the mantle of youth wrapping the foot of age, adorns the base of the venerable mount, replying, “I wonder how many sheep it would feed ?” Or while hearkening to his musings on its majestic height and solitary grandeur, responding, “A cold place, the top of that hill, on a stormy day !” Or to his allusions to its frozen torrents, its sea of glaciers, and its thundering avalanches, rejoining, “What a fine skating field it would make, if it was but level !” Such persons would disrobe nature of her charms, her inspiration, and her poetry and send her back exposed and shivering to the shades whence she sprung. They doubtless have their uses ; so had the hodmen who climbed the temporary scaffolding which once surrounded the majestic structures, the creations of genius, which are the wonder and the ornaments of the world.

Genius is usually associated with sensibility. It is the antipodes of dulness, of that “*nil admirari*” temper which makes men insensible to all approaches from without. It renders its possessor susceptible to the bright and the beautiful, from whatever quarters they may spring. It attracts its own kind and responds to its own voice, whether from the field or from the forum. It will draw forth the gems which sparkle in a Juvenal or an Ovid, in a Shelley or a Swift, from amidst the debris which may defile and entomb them.

There is a community in genius—in its elements and in its sons, a mystic brotherhood, a time-honored and resplendent heraldry. The relatives of Sydney Smith lived before the flood, and his legitimate descendants will listen to the tolling bell of time.

Like other qualities of the human mind, it exists in measures and degrees. It has doubtless been dimly reflected from the writings of thousands of talented men whose works have long gone to the “vault of all the Capulets.” It may gleam forth in unassuming sobriety in the productions of a Montgomery and a Cowper. It may flash out in grotesque jets from the pages of a Herbert and a Quarles. It may assume a more stately mien in the lines of an Ariosto and a Schiller, or it may ascend its uncontested throne in the prodigies of the great masters of epic or dramatic song. But wherever it appears, in its humbler or more pretensive guise, it bears the stamp of royalty on its brow.

Before proceeding, permit me to turn aside for a minute, to notice an attempt made by some in the present day to confound the broad and inerasible distinctions between inspiration and genius, to merge in one the poet and the prophet.

Inspiration is a supernatural—genius is a natural gift.

Inspiration was vouchsafed for special purposes—genius is given for general uses.

Inspiration may be confined to a part of life—genius pervades the whole.

Inspiration may exist where there is no genius—genius would have existed had there been no inspiration.

Inspiration anticipates reason—genius is the handmaid of it.

Inspired men think and teach alike—the thinkings and teachings of men of genius may be wide as the poles asunder.

Inspiration is an infallible—genius a fallible guide.

Inspiration built up the fabric of revealed truth—genius may employ itself in attempts to pull it down.

Whatever men may think, either of inspiration or of genius, the two ideas are sufficiently distinct, and to attempt to confound them is absurd.

No one possessed of the slightest discernment, who knew Robert Hall, could hesitate to regard him as endowed with genius of the highest order, though this precious gift did not constitute the most prominent feature of his mind. Intellect, the power (as the word intends) of seeing within, mental penetration, was the great attribute of this distinguished man. No subjects which lie definitely within the vast domains of thought were too intricate or too severe for his scrutinising eye. The difficulties which to ordinary thinkers embarrass and darken such themes, disappeared at his approach, as the massive gates opened before the angel who led forth Peter to liberty and to light. His power of analysis, of resolving things into their simple elements, was extraordinary and complete. The component parts of any proposition would separate and marshal themselves in atomic order, as though by magic, before his glance, as the ingredients of some mixed substance are held in solution or combination under the hand of the skilful chemist. His intuition, his metaphysical acumen was seldom at fault. This ability to detect the qualities of subjects and to divide them into their several parts, sometimes exists in great vigor unaccompanied by larger and statelier faculties, an incident in the mental, analogous to a strong but short-sighted eye in the physical world.

But this capacity was united in Mr. Hall with the power, in a still more marked degree, of synthesis, of comparing, combining and constructing. His mind was large as well as microscopic, all embracing in its range and especially adapted

to the study of the more massive and mighty themes. In connexion with this happy union of the keen and the piercing with the wide and contemplative in the structure of his mind, and perhaps as the result of it, there was a singular maturity of the reasoning power. As few subjects could evade the sharpness or lie beyond the boundaries of his vision, so nothing could exceed the wonderful precision of his thoughts, or the resistless logic of his singularly balanced powers. No fallacy would remain undetected, no false deduction unexposed and no sophistry unravelled before the vigor of this faculty; nor would he leave out in his argumentative process, the minutest consideration essential to give completeness or even beauty to his work. His intellect was at once comprehensive and minute, like the trunk of an elephant, equally adapted to root up a tree or to pick up a pin. In a beautiful sketch of his father, the Rev. Robert Hall, sen., he, in one sentence, as his biographer, Dr. Gregory, observes, accurately depicted himself: "He appeared to the highest advantage upon subjects where the faculties of most men fail them; for the natural element of his mind was greatness."

Genius seen in such combinations, would not, in the nature of the case, be obtrusive; the magnificent proportions of the fabric attract our attention and excite our admiration, rather than the soft sunlight in which it is bathed. Could the exquisite harmony—the majestic equilibrium of his powers have been diminished or destroyed, the popular attention might have been more attracted by their splendor. But his brightest sallies never oppressed the eye with their glare, proceeding as they did from a mind whose dimensions and solidity inspired the beholder with a sentiment of awe. Take away his genius, subtract it from the man, and you would leave nevertheless a most distinguished creature. He would still rise serenely and proudly above the crowd,

a substantial towering structure, like the Parthenon, from amidst the huts and the mansions of Athens.

In evidence of the penetration and the logical power of his mind, it is sufficient to refer you to his work entitled “Terms of Communion,” a book which, from the nature of its subject, must be confined to a comparatively limited circulation, but which for compactness and severity of reasoning, merits the highest commendation. Nor is it possible to overlook his sermon on “Modern Infidelity,” preached at Cambridge in the year 1800, before the thunderings of the French Revolutions had died away. This discourse deserves to be read and admired for its profundity, its clearness, and its power, as long as our language lasts, or the remains of infidelity linger in the world. In a letter respecting it, from Sir James Mackintosh, dated March 26, 1800, the following lines occur :

“DEAR HALL,—From the enclosed letter you will see the opinion which the Bishop of London* has formed of your sermon ; and you will observe that he does some justice to your merit. Mr. Archdeacon Eaton, to whom the letter was written, has allowed me to send it to you ; and I thought it might not be disagreeable to you to have it as the opinion of a man, not, indeed, of very vigorous understanding, but an elegant writer, a man of taste and virtue—not to mention his high station in the church.

“I last night had a conversation about the sermon with a man of much greater talents, at a place where theological, or even literary discussions are seldom heard. It was with Mr. Windham, at the Duchess of Gordon’s rout. I asked him whether he had read it. He told me that he had ; that he recommended it to every body, and among others, on that very day, to the new Bishop of Bangor,† who had dined with him. He said that he was exceedingly struck with the style, but still more with the matter.”

* Dr. Porteus.

† Dr. Cleaver.

The writer of this paragraph, and the subject of this sketch, were companions in study at Aberdeen, where by mutual and most friendly intercourse, they braced each other's minds. "Hall," said the statesman, on one occasion, "first taught me to think." "Mackintosh," said the divine, once in my hearing, "has extraordinary powers; he is a most intellectual man; there is nothing too abstruse for him."

But genius, in the subject of this lecture, was associated not only with power, but with culture, with a mind subject to the severest discipline and enriched with varied attainments. It is a delusion to suppose that eminent natural endowments are a premium on indolence, or that they supersede the necessity for assiduous cultivation; on the contrary, while they augment the obligation, they strengthen the stimulus to exertion. It is in the nature of intellect to be active, and this innate tendency to put forth its functions exists with the greatest force in the most capacious minds, whilst it is vexed into restless vitality wherever genius establishes its seat. The acquisition of learning and of knowledge was, with Mr. Hall, an easy process. Whilst he communicated with unusual readiness to the minds of others, he appropriated with equal facility surrounding stores. The mastery of languages, an insight into the systems and schemes of philosophy which have distracted or enlightened the world, a familiar acquaintance with the exacter sciences, with a perfect magazine of miscellaneous knowledge, were with him comparatively facile achievements; he seemed to gather them up in his way, and to wear them, as light and elegant ornaments, with a dignified unconsciousness that he was wearing them at all. Things which constitute the pride and the glory of some distinguished men, were with him but the modest appendages of his mind. Though he never pretended to take rank among the men renowned for learning in his day, the

Porsons, the Bentleys, or the Parrs, his erudition was at once deep and wide ; but had it surpassed ever so far the measures by which it was limited, it must have remained unobtrusive—it would have been lost in the blaze of the greater attributes by which he was distinguished.

Some persons attain to celebrity in literature by the mere process of accumulation, by gathering information on various subjects and carefully depositing it in their minds, arranging and assorting it by a kind of mechanical rule like the distinctly labelled parcels in a well ordered warehouse. Such students are of great value in society, resembling the useful pack horse of former times, bearing his load from village to village and from town to town, distributing his burden on his way ; or the plodding camel, who meekly carries his burden across the desert, to enrich a distant and necessitous people. But in the instance before us learning was not simply collected but absorbed, imperceptibly blending itself with the mind which acquired it ; becoming wrought in with its tissues and fibres, strengthening rather than loading the faculties it blest. The mind of Robert Hall was emphatically a cultivated region ; less like a storehouse than a spacious vineyard ; resembling not so much a granary, in which the precious grain of a former harvest lies in wealthy heaps, as the productive lands in which it yields its treasures to the waving breeze and spreads them in golden affluence beneath the autumnal sky. His power of assimilation and reproduction equalled his faculty of acquisition.

Nothing could exceed however the polish and the grace which he derived from his acquaintance with the productions of the schools, from his familiarity with the writings of distinguished men on almost all the subjects of human interest, and from that wonderful aptitude by which he made all that he touched his own.

Genius in feebler and partially disciplined minds is often

wild and erratic, obeying unsteady impulses and expressing itself in irregular flashes, playing like forked lightning on a dark background of cloud, or bursting forth in volcanic throes. This ethereal presence charms and attracts wherever it exists, however homely its abode or rustic its dress, but finds its most appropriate sphere in vigorous and well ordered minds. In the absence of the sterner faculties and higher principles of mind and of action, it is apt by its fascinating light to lead both its possessor and its admirer astray. Impatient of control by anything inferior to itself, and refusing to be governed by the maxims which a cold prudence would present, it is unequally yoked when connected with weakness or with ignorance, and resembles a ship in a boisterous sea without ballast, which is in danger of becoming the plaything of the billows and the sport of the storm. But associated with such powers and blended with such cultivation, as in the instance of the great man whose characteristics we portray, it was a sober and serene thing, a sort of vestal flame glowing in the midst of a spacious and chaste temple, borrowing from as well as imparting dignity to the scene.

The genius of Robert Hall was æsthetical rather than inventive; shewed itself more in taste than in imagination. Not that he was deficient in the more original faculty, but that it existed in harmony rather than in relief, taking its appropriate place in obedience to that great law of symmetry that so marvellously distinguished his powers. In the absence of this regulating principle—this harmonising spirit, to which all his faculties did homage, his imagination must have been more remarkably developed. The elements were there, and even the capability, as was occasionally indicated, of the most elevated ideality and exhaustless fancy. But these were held in check, were reined back, by a masculine judgment

and an indomitable will. Constituted as he was, his imagination could never have put on the splendor of Burke's, the luxuriance of Jeremy Taylor's, or the grandeur of Milton's; his mental peculiarities and his habits alike forbade it. Capable and even disposed as he might have been to indulge this brilliant attribute, he was more strongly bent on the exercise of the graver powers, and delighting as he did in its occasional flights, he rather took pleasure in the cultivation of the severities of taste. Hence he was not so often seen trying the pinions of his mighty mind, as in adjusting and smoothing its elegant and dazzling plumage.

Genuine taste is the offspring of judgment and imagination combined. Where imagination preponderates over judgment, there will most likely be a passion for the showy and the fine, or where judgment prevails to the exclusion of imagination, there may be a preference for the plain and the precise; but it is to the influence which these faculties existing in combination, produce on each other, that we are to look for correct and elevated taste. This new faculty springing out of such an association, like the goddess from the head of the thunderer, renders its possessor sensitive not only to the texture, but to the tints and hues of thought and of language, and constitutes him a kind of armed censor in the world of letters. If Johnson and Addison are to be regarded as models of taste, it must be admitted, I think, that we have sadly deteriorated in these days, and that the highways of literature have become crowded with hosts of most refractory disciples. From the tortuous evolutions of some to the glittering and sickening platitudes of others, we are supplied with a succession of aspirants who seem bent on trampling out the last embers of that simplicity which is the invariable companion of taste and the basis of all true sublimity. A gaudy and flaunting attire is substituted for that graceful and flowing robe in which the masters of com-

position were accustomed to appear; nature is smothered by art, and tinsel takes the place of gold. There are some happy and honorable exceptions to this rule, and among them stands preeminently the distinguished Macaulay, who seems as though he had been raised up to redeem our literature, in these respects, from deserved negligence and contempt. It is well that the flimsy and bedizened obtruders which throng the path cannot deprive us of the productions of a former age, or obscure behind their painted scenes the chaste monuments which have been rescued from its wreck.

Those who have no means of forming an estimate of Robert Hall but through the channel of his writings, must fall far short of a correct idea of the original; incomparable in some respects as these writings are, they but faintly reflect the man. It is the more to be regretted that they are so fragmental and few, since as time obliterates his image from the tablet of living hearts, no adequate memorial of him is left. Some authors seen through their works acquire an artificial magnitude, and like objects in a mist, look larger than they are. Their efforts, wearing the character of compilations rather than of productions, and presenting not so much the fruits of their own power, as gleanings from the vintage of time, impart to their names a fabulous notoriety and give to the authors themselves an ideal bulk. But no such illusion can pass here. In the instance before us, posterity will receive but a very inadequate impression of the cedar from the pieces of bark which remain.

Of these remnants however, scattered as they are, Dugald Stewart, no mean authority, in the course of his lectures, says, "There is one writer who combines in himself all the excellencies of Burke, Addison, and Johnson. He who would read the English language in perfection, must acquaint himself with the writings of Robert Hall, of Leicester."

If we are asked for evidence of the correctness of this eulogy, we say, with the epitaph to Sir Christopher Wren, look around. Proofs abound in almost every page of his productions and are to be traced in the beautiful simplicity of his thoughts, in the exquisite propriety and occasional splendor of his diction, and in the divine dexterity with which he touches the deepest springs of the heart. His taste, as indicated in his style, was absolutely faultless; never degenerating into insipidity on the one hand, nor verging towards extravagance on the other. It well nigh discourages us by its perfection. It is too finished to admit of successful imitation, and resembles rather a creation than a model.

This maturity of taste shewed itself as much in his aversions as in his selections, in the antipathies as in the complacencies of his mind. If ever he felt tempted to draw forth from an exhaustless quiver the shafts of a resistless irony, it was to transfix the verbose, the affected, and the turgid—the man who desecrates the temple of taste by prostituting the sacred resources of language to the purpose of exhibition and display. His perfect reverence for propriety, induced him to turn from such efforts with irrepressible indignation and disgust.

Passages illustrative of these remarks might be cited from his sermons, his reviews, or his miscellaneous pieces. From his character of Cleander, his classic Reverie, or from his exquisite discourse on the death of Dr. Ryland. In his chaste and discriminating memoir of the late Rev. T. Toller, of whose talents he formed a just and therefore a high appreciation, and of whom he cherished a most affectionate remembrance, he says, “In strokes of sudden pathos and of unpolished grandeur, Mr. Toller was almost unequalled,” and in a discourse respecting him, he is reported to have said, “When the Head of the Church sent Toller to Kettering, he conferred a distinguished honor on that place, and when he

died, it was as though he had let fall a star from his right hand and the whole hemisphere was darkened by his loss!" In his "Character of the late Rev. Thomas Robinson," formerly vicar of St. Mary's in this town, a speech delivered in 1813, the following paragraph occurs:

"Though I have had the honor of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Robinson for upwards of thirty years, it is comparatively but of late that I had an opportunity of contemplating him more nearly. While placed at a distance, I admired him as one of the remote luminaries which adorn the hemisphere; I certainly perceived him to be a star of the first magnitude: but no sooner was I stationed upon the spot, than I became sensible of the lustre of his beams, felt the force of his attraction, and recognised in him the sun and centre of the system. His merit was not of that kind which attracts most admiration at a distance. It was so genuine and solid, that it grew in estimation the more closely it was inspected. It is possible some men may have extended their influence to a wider circle, and moved in a more extended sphere. But where influence is diffused beyond a certain limit, it becomes attenuated in proportion to its diffusion; it operates with an energy less intense. Mr. Robinson completely filled as large a sphere of personal agency as is, perhaps, possible to an individual. He left no part of it unoccupied, no interstices unsupplied, and spread himself through it with an energy in which there was nothing irregular, nothing defective, nothing redundant."

In repelling some reflections which had been unjustly cast, from a most unexpected quarter, on the celebrated Dr. Priestley, he says, in his "Christianity consistent with the love of Freedom,"

"The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. From him the poisoned arrow will fall pointless. His enlightened

and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period, when the greater part of those who have favored, or those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapors which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and with a softened effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide."

Genius may very occasionally be seen in cold and unfriendly alliance, divested of its warmer colors, presenting the beauty of frost-work. When it assumes this phase—wears the aspect of brilliancy without heat, it looks more like a borrowed than a native attribute, seems as though it were reflected rather than expressed. The beholder feels that there is something wanting, and that for once nature has but partially fulfilled her mission, has retired from her glorious work before having given to it the last and the finishing touch. In such instances there will generally be found a defectiveness of handling; a strength of judgment it may be, and an indefinite power of painting, but a want of correct delineation, of sketches true to life, of that blending and fusion of elements and parts, so essential to an impressive whole. Minds so constituted have about them an air of severity, and will delight in pointing the shafts of satire and in barbing the arrows of a cynical resentment, rather than in diffusing around them the gentler influences. They will walk with a supercilious satisfaction amidst the ruins which genius can occasion, rather than dwell with pleasure on the beautiful fabrics it can raise. It loses in these cases its attractive force, fails to draw us into close and delightful sympathy with it—acquires a sort of centrifugal energy without a corresponding magnetic charm. We are compelled

to admire but do not linger that we might gaze : we feel like the traveller on a winter's night, who looks with astonishment on the bright moonlight scene, but all the while, is thinking about the genialities of home. In such a relation genius is deprived of half its power, of the faculty of permeating and melting substances with its beams, in addition to that always common to it, of rendering their surfaces lustrous with its rays. Such was Voltaire. Brilliant, strong, acute ! Haughty, frigid, politic ! A floating and glistening iceberg, on which many a mariner looked with awe. A mountain whose top was covered with snow.

But passion is the natural handmaid of genius—the Eve of that paradise which its great author has sent it to tend and to till. The province assigned to this endowment in the mysterious but beautiful operations of mind, is to shed a vitalising influence through the breast in which it takes up its abode, to throw around the faculties of the soul a genial atmosphere, and to clothe them with the freshness and the verdure of spring. It shews itself less in sensible signs than in inward earnestness of spirit, and is perfectly compatible with a quiet exterior. Energy is one thing, passion is another. The one may be resolvable into physical temperament and may be worn and thrown off at will, the other is the offspring of the heart and the mind, the exquisite growth of generosity combined with integrity, and is the inmate of the soul—a holy fire that even death will find it difficult to quench. This subtle element of our nature sanctified by its presence the capacious powers of Robert Hall. No man ever lived at a greater remove from the selfish, the calculating, and the politic. The maxims of an enlarged prudence commended themselves to his heart and influenced the current of his life, but the colder and the narrower principles which so frequently determine the courses of men, had no power with him ; they were consumed

whenever they obtruded within the precincts of his breast, and their very ashes were swept out with an ardent disdain. He was no disciple of the school which regards genius as the harbinger of interest, as the pioneer of personal objects and ends, but ranked among those who consult its loftier adaptations and designs, who regard it as the legitimate vindicator of the rights and rebuker of the wrongs of men. Passion was one of the secrets of his strength, the altar from which he took the live coals of his genius and imbibed some of the mightier inspirations which he breathed. Genius without passion presents us with the image of an angel, who being sent on some great commission gets, somehow or other, frost-bitten on his way. Seen in union with it, as in the instance before us, it is as a winged seraphim radiating celestial fire in his flight.

One of the finest features of genius, in its most exalted form, is an insensibility to its own light; it is accustomed to emit its splendors in obedience to inherent laws. Vanity is the foible of little minds and the cherished weed of vicious ones. Modesty is the invariable accompaniment of true greatness, the coronet with which nature adorns her more distinguished sons. Where genius stands alone, unsustained by congenial attributes and unassociated with the higher moral sentiments, it may amuse itself in playing with its own beams and derive gratification in tracing its image reflected from its works. But in its nobler developments and loftier attitudes it shrinks from self-contemplation and is unconscious of its own greatness. The impressions which fall upon it from without—from the silent and solemn ministries of nature, and the ideas which rise up within—in connection with the still mightier regions of imagination and of thought, connect it with the profound, the vast, and the infinite, and so occasion a sense of comparative insignificance. The greater the capacity to receive these impressions, the more entire is

the feeling of self-annihilation which ensues. A tiny insect fluttering about the pyramids, would be but a faint emblem of genius approaching the great subjects which invite and environ it. "I," said Sir Isaac Newton, when closing his brilliant career, "have only been picking up a few pebbles on the shores of an interminable ocean."

To this order of mind Robert Hall belonged. He habitually retired within himself and seemed concealed in his own light. Always ready to commend and admire the judicious efforts of others, it was difficult to convince him that anything that he could do could merit the attention of discerning and cultivated men. Nothing short of the reiterated entreaties of his friends would induce him to go to press, while all attempts to prevail on him to undertake some work worthy of his talents and of his name, were fruitless. In company with him on one occasion, among other subjects I distinctly recollect the conversation turning on the art of composition, when amongst other remarks he said, "I have in my mind, sir, an ideal standard, a standard which I can't approach; it always evades me; I can feel, therefore, little satisfaction in anything I write." There is no doubt that he was deterred from writing, partly by the mechanical labor it imposed, and by the physical suffering he endured, but I think not chiefly, but rather by the cast of his mind and from the essential modesty of his character. At another time I asked him whether he would recommend young ministers to write for the pulpit? "No, sir," he replied, "by no means.—I would cultivate the art of composition, and always, if I could, have something under my pen, but not write for the pulpit. What is gained in accuracy is lost in effect. I have occasionally written a discourse and committed it to memory, but as a rule it is a bad one. My usual plan is to think my subject thoroughly out; to see my way clearly to the end of

it and then leave the words, the mode of expression, entirely to the occasion ; in fact, sir, I fold the subject round my mind in the study, and I unfold it from the pulpit."

Robert Hall possessed in an extraordinary degree the enviable and rare faculty of rendering the abstrusest subjects intelligible to ordinary minds. He had no secret any more than other mortals by which he could move incurable dullness, or eradicate stolid stupidity, but he had the happy art of commending the results of great penetration and thought to the commonest understanding. For this singularly felicitous capability, he was chiefly indebted to the distinctness and the vividness of his perceptions and to his imperial command of language. He was delivered from difficulties which frequently embarrass less favored minds—fortunately free from that mistiness and vagueness which sometimes surround and invade them. It could never be said of him as he once said of another, "He is a sensible man in some things, sir, and not without mind, but he seems always in confusion : he has some ideas in his head, sir, but they come out the wrong way upwards." Thought formed within his breast, with all the completeness and the clearness of rays of light, while the beautiful process passed with such amazing rapidity, that you seemed to see its elements crystallising within the precincts of his transparent soul. His perceptions were as strong as they were vivid, firm in their texture and healthy in their tone. They passed through none of the intermediate stages requisite to conduct the ideas of weaker and obscurer minds to maturity ; but appeared at once in manly vigor, fit for enjoyment or for use. It might be said with eminent propriety of him that "he shone strongly on the angles of a thought." So habitual was this quickness and brightness of conception, that he would be impatient of hesitancy in others and not unfrequently come to your help and tell you what you meant,

or what you ought to mean, before you wholly perceived it yourself. He would put with the velocity of lightning the crude formations of other minds into their appropriate shapes; would catch slow thinkers up in his chariot of light and conduct them to a conclusion before they knew where they were.

The compactness and lucidness of his ideas were suitably sustained by the naturalness of their attire. His words appeared less like the dress than the exuviæ of his thoughts; as though language were not a system of symbols extraneous of the mind, to be plastically employed in its service, but a spontaneous creation, an intrinsic element of thought. He sustained no inconvenience arising from the difficulty, felt by some celebrated men, in selecting suitable terms in which to convey the ideas he entertained. The best possible phrases were, as by instinct, always put in the wisest possible place, superseding the necessity for revision, and rendering hopeless a more felicitous conjunction of terms. And all this passed with a perfectly electric swiftness, so that there appeared no process of consideration, no act of choice passing in the breast. Genius and taste constantly attended, like spiritual ministers, the advent of his ideas, standing ready to conduct them to a vehicle exquisitely fitted and fashioned to their use. He sat enthroned amidst the interminable stores of language, while words adapted to the severity of argument, to the playfulness of fancy, or to the thunders of declamation, seemed to come and go at his bidding. So equipped, then, and carrying these attributes with him into the consideration and discussion of the profoundest subjects, he would draw them forth from their obscurity and render them palpable and intelligible to the most unpretending minds.

At the same time he had, what may possibly be regarded as the still rarer ability, of investing the commonest subjects

with an irresistible charm to the highest and most cultivated persons. For this singular gift we are indebted to that earnest interest which he took in all that relates to the welfare and progress of man—to a benevolence as genial as it was diffusive. With him in one sense, there was nothing common. He was wise enough to know, and great enough to feel, that things of but minor interest to one may be of large significance to another. That the most limited as well as the widest circles embrace within their circumference cares, pleasures, wants, aspirations, and are therefore alike the proper centres of attention and of sympathy. The happiness of the artisan and the repose of a monarch, the anxieties of the cottage or the throes of an empire, arrested his interest and supplied him with the materials of thought. Though he would often ascend into the vast regions of philosophic speculation, he would come sweeping down from these perilous heights in grand and graceful gyrations, and alight wherever he heard the cry of misery or the call of duty. From this benign and practical tendency of his nature, combined with the restless activity of his intellect, he was adapted and disposed to entertain subjects which men of very inferior make might deem beneath their notice, and to form and to render an opinion on all the topics of human interest and pursuit. He discerned that mysterious and indissoluble connection which the Divine Providence has instituted between the several relations and conditions of things, and knew better than most that society could not be injured or benefitted in either of these without a corresponding vibration for good or for evil spreading through the whole. In approaching the lightest and what might seem to some the most frivolous themes which this wide field of survey and of interests might supply, he would touch them as with a magic wand, trace their ramifications and lay bare their nearer or their remoter results, throw around them a dignity and baptise them in a light which

would arrest the eye and captivate the judgment of all within his reach, while he would lay hold of the passing incident of the moment however ordinary and trite, and render it, unconsciously, the mirror from which would be reflected the varying tints of his sportive or his pensive mood.

If unusual combinations are justly esteemed as a sign of genius, Robert Hall presented this additional credential, in the union of condensation and elaboration which distinguished him. He would compress within the narrowest possible limits a dense mass of thought, or would expand an idea far beyond what might seem to be the utmost capability of its range. One or other of these tendencies may often be observed to characterise conspicuous men, but it is by no means common to meet them in close and natural alliance. Instances of the condensed style occur in the productions of Butler, Edwards, and Fuller, and examples of the more elaborate in the writings of Blair and of Chalmers. But in Mr. Hall, these apparently contrary powers met. Sentences might be selected from his works which carry within them the wisdom of the profoundest maxims without their forms, and all the terseness of the completest aphorisms without their quaintness, while proofs are abundant of the breadth and the opulence of his style. This happy combination imparted a majesty to the operations of his mind, which in its workings resembled a stately billow with its silvery crest, advancing from the bed of the ocean, till breaking on the shore it covers the extended strand with sparkling beauty and light.

No two public men could differ more widely on some great subjects, than Jeremy Bentham and Robert Hall. But when the jurist published his celebrated work, he sent it to his great contemporary, an act of courtesy which no one knew how to appreciate better than he. Meeting a friend soon afterwards, Mr. Hall said, "Have you read Bentham's

work on jurisprudence, sir?" "No, sir," was the reply. "Then I would recommend you to get it; it is an astonishing work, sir; the most extraordinary production of modern times;" adding, "there is such vastness in its conception and such solidity in its argument, that it is like walking through infinity on adamant." A finer specimen of the aphoristic style, I think, it would be difficult to adduce.

As an instance illustrative of the opposite, I need only refer you to the close of a discourse entitled "Sentiments proper to the present crisis," delivered at Bristol, early in the present century.

"To form an adequate idea of the duties of this crisis, it will be necessary to raise your minds to a level with your station, to extend your views to a distant futurity, and to consequences the most certain, though most remote. By a series of criminal enterprises, by the successes of guilty ambition, the liberties of Europe have been gradually extinguished: the subjugation of Holland, Switzerland, and the free towns of Germany, has completed that catastrophe; and we are the only people in the eastern hemisphere who are in possession of equal laws, and a free constitution. Freedom, driven from every spot on the continent, has sought an asylum in a country which she always chose for her favorite abode: but she is pursued even here, and threatened with destruction. The inundation of lawless power, after covering the whole earth, threatens to follow us here; and we are most exactly, most critically placed, in the only aperture where it can be successfully repelled, in the Thermopylæ of the universe. As far as the interests of freedom are concerned, the most important by far of sublunary interests, you, my countrymen, stand in the capacity of the foederal representatives of the human race; for with you it is to determine (under God) in what condition the latest posterity shall be born; their fortunes are intrusted to your care, and on your conduct at this moment depends the color and complection of their destiny. If liberty, after being extinguished on the continent, is suffered to expire here, whence is it ever to emerge in the midst of that thick night that will

invest it? It remains with you then to decide whether that freedom, at whose voice the kingdoms of Europe awoke from the sleep of ages, to run a career of virtuous emulation in every thing great and good; the freedom which dispelled the mists of superstition, and invited the nations to behold their God; whose magic touch kindled the rays of genius, the enthusiasm of poetry, and the flame of eloquence; the freedom which poured into our lap opulence and arts, and embellished life with innumerable institutions and improvements, till it became a theatre of wonders; it is for you to decide whether this freedom shall yet survive, or be covered with a funeral pall, and wrapt in eternal gloom. It is not necessary to await your determination. In the solicitude you feel to approve yourselves worthy of such a trust, every thought of what is afflicting in warfare, every apprehension of danger must vanish, and you are impatient to mingle in the battle of the civilized world. Go then, ye defenders of your country,* accompanied with every auspicious omen; advance with alacrity into the field, where God himself musters the hosts to war. Religion is too much interested in your success, not to lend you her aid; she will shed over this enterprise her selectest influence. While you are engaged in the field, many will repair to the closet, many to the sanctuary; the faithful of every name will employ that prayer which has power with God; the feeble hands which are unequal to any other weapon, will grasp the sword of the spirit; and from myriads of humble, contrite hearts, the voice of intercession, supplication, and weeping, will mingle in its ascent to heaven with the shouts of battle and the shock of arms.

“While you have every thing to fear from the success of the enemy, you have every means of preventing that success, so that it is next to impossible for victory not to crown your exertions. The extent of your resources, under God, is equal to the justice of your cause. But should Providence determine otherwise, should you fall in this struggle, should the nation fall, you will have the satisfaction (the purest allotted to man) of having performed your part; your names will be enrolled with the most illustrious dead, while posterity, to the end of time, as often as they revolve the events of this period (and

* A company of volunteers attended public worship on this occasion.

they will incessantly revolve them), will turn to you a reverential eye, while they mourn over the freedom which is entombed in your sepulchre. I cannot but imagine the virtuous heroes, legislators, and patriots, of every age and country, are bending from their elevated seats to witness this contest, as if they were incapable, till it be brought to a favorable issue, of enjoying their eternal repose. Enjoy that repose, illustrious immortals! Your mantle fell when you ascended; and thousands, inflamed with your spirit, and impatient to tread in your steps, are ready *to swear by Him that sitteth upon the throne, and liveth for ever and ever*, they will protect freedom in her last asylum, and never desert that cause which you sustained by your labors, and cemented with your blood. And thou, sole Ruler among the children of men, to whom the shields of the earth belong, *gird on thy sword, thou Most Mighty*: go forth with our hosts in the day of battle! Impart, in addition to their hereditary valor, that confidence of success which springs from thy presence! Pour into their hearts the spirit of departed heroes! Inspire them with thine own; and, while led by thine hand, and fighting under thy banners, open thou their eyes to behold in every valley, and in every plain, what the prophet beheld by the same illumination—chariots of fire, and horses of fire! *Then shall the strong man be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."*

Whatever may be thought by some as to the sentiment of this quotation, read in its connection, it must be admitted to be one of the most elaborate passages extant in any language.

But if there was one feature in Mr. Hall more surprising than another, in which he transcended himself, it was his commanding and bewitching power of conversation. There was nothing in it, however, resembling the stately monologues of Coleridge, the sententious bursts of Johnson, or the pyrotechnic displays of Lamb. But it had about it the charm of nature, a beguilement and a fascination which were

the result of its accuracy, its ease, and its dignity. He was not accustomed when he appeared in the social circle to separate himself from his friends, and to deliver, "ex cathedra," the opinions he advanced. He was a quick observer as well as a courteous visitor, and preferred to listen to the sentiments of others rather than to be forward in offering his own. But the conversation would not advance far before his interest would be awakened. If it were desultory in its character, he would beautify and enliven it by the unobtrusive part he would take in the quiet drama. Should it assume the form of an argument, it would under his guidance soon widen and deepen in its course. Or if it rose to the height, on the part of any, of a friendly struggle, he would take the side of the weaker combatant, and by the skilfulness of his fencing and the celerity of his strokes would soon clear the ground and drive his antagonist from the field. Should the result, as might occasionally happen, be due to the dexterity of his movements rather than to the strength of his cause, he would lay aside his armor with such inimitable grace, and utter so melodiously in the ear of admirers the pœan of victory, that even his victim would be proud to leave him in possession of his laurels.

If fortunate enough to be thrown into his company, with one or two select friends, in the entire confidence of the home and of the hearth, and if endowed with the skill of stimulating his powers without provoking his suspicion, he would, if in one of his happier moods, leave on the passing hour, the footprints of a wisdom, the sunlight of a genius, and the soft echoes of an eloquence which must consecrate it to memory, as a sort of sabbatic season, to the latest evening of life.

The late Rev. Thomas Mitchell, who was at the time an Independent minister in this town, once shewed me a note

which he had received some time before from Mr. Hall, earnestly requesting the favor of his company the following morning, “as,” said the writer, “I am expecting a visit from the celebrated Dr. Parr, and I feel incompetent to the interview; let me intreat you to come and help me to sustain the conversation of the morning.” Mr. M. told me he went, and that he should always regard it as the highest treat he had ever enjoyed—that he listened with delight and astonishment to the distinguished talkers, and that after three hours the clergyman withdrew, leaving his great associate pale and exhausted from the excitement of the interview.

To coarse humor, which is often nothing more than the cutaneous eruption of imperfect minds, Robert Hall never descended; but with that genuine wit, which Burton says, with equal beauty and truth, “has its rise near the springs of melancholy,” he was richly imbued. While rarely to be met with in his writings for reasons it would be easy to disclose, it pervaded his conversation, relieving its gravity, adding to its refinement and yielding the keenest delight to all who came within its range. It partook of that quality which enters into the essence of true wit, spontaneity; it was unstudied, elicited by passing circumstances, and flowed without effort as from a perennial spring. It was the emanation of his intellect, pure, pointed, and serene; undisturbed by the rippings of temper, and unshaded by the clouds of scorn. Like other qualities of his nature, it was not a wild and random messenger, but was subject to his control, and observed in its sallies the proprieties of its occasion. If indeed it sometimes became mingled with the more indignant emotions and flamed forth in the spirit of sarcasm and rebuke, it fell on its victim like “hailstones and coals of fire.” A gentler or a nobler nature has seldom adorned the earth, but if just occasion occurred and he became roused from his accustomed

repose, he would get up, and like the fabled Jupiter, hurl his bolts with unerring precision ; or as when the lion, disturbed in his lair, issues forth, and the tenants of the forest tremble at his roar.

It may not be out of place nor beneath the dignity of the occasion to give two or three instances of the sprightly and happy turns so characteristic of Mr. Hall's ordinary conversation.

A minister who carried his notions of social propriety to a prudish and even to a slavish extent, though he was accustomed to take great liberties in his public exercises, once said, after listening to his animating remarks, " I am surprised, Mr. Hall, you should indulge in such levity, after the very impressive discourse you have given us this morning." " O, sir," was the reply, " both of us talk nonsense occasionally ; the only difference between us is, that you talk yours in the pulpit and I mine out."

Walking once with a friend, he observed a person approaching them, when he said, " Let's turn aside, sir, here's Mr. So-and-so coming ; I don't want to meet him ; he is a very disagreeable man ; there is always something the matter with him ; he is for ever talking about his ailments ; let's turn aside, sir." " It's no use now," said his friend, " he is just here." " Then we must make the best of it." In the meantime the plaintive gentleman accosted him with, " How do you do, Mr. Hall ?" " How do you do, sir ? I hope you are very well." " No, sir, I am very bad indeed ; I have been quite at Death's door since I saw you." " Have you indeed, sir," was the reply, " It's a pity but you had walked in : I wish you good day, sir."

Some young man, who was more obtrusive than modest, and who fancied himself a metaphysician, once asked him, among other annoying questions, what he thought about

progressive knowledge, whether our minds would grow in another world. "Your mind grow, sir?" he said, "I dare say it will, and your body too, then you may sit upon the equator and your legs dangle over the poles!"

Walking with him once in the city of Wells, in Somerset, we went together, at his request, to see the cathedral, the great attraction of the place. As he stood before it, he said, evidently with strong emotion, "Dear, what a building it is, sir! what a surprising structure! why, how ornate it is, and how massive! what a pile, to be sure; the earth groans beneath it!" Turning to me, he asked, "When was it built, sir?" "They say it was founded in the time of king Ina, sir." "Was it, indeed? Why it will stand to the judgment day, I believe." On my laughing, he said very quickly, "What do you laugh at, sir?" "At your last remark, sir," I said. "Well, sir, you say it was built in the time of king Ina, that's upwards of nine hundred years ago, and if you observe the apostle standing in that niche, he has only lost the tip of his nose in nine hundred years. If that is the ratio at which the decay is to go on, I mean to say it is very likely to stand to the judgment day, or it's a long way off, sir."

Those attributes and qualities which are regarded as extremes and are usually found in distribution, were concentrated in this justly celebrated individual; whatever is requisite to constitute an imposing specimen of our nature met and blended in him. He was not so much an original as an elaborated man, resembling less a bold and formidable promontory than a graceful and verdant mountain, reposing in majesty amidst the hills. The simplicity of his character was as remarkable as the elevation of his mind. That unsophisticated frankness which is the inheritance of childhood, but which so often becomes impaired if not entirely defaced, attended him through all his course and enshrined without

weakening his powers ; it seemed as inextinguishable as the genius it adorned, and made him as much the envy of the good as the admiration of the great. This primitive quality invested him with inimitable charm, and seen in conjunction with his superb faculties, constituted a union which none but the cynical would have wished to disturb. It captivated the humblest and astonished the proudest of his admirers, and formed a link between all that is artless and all that is noble in our nature. It presented in harmony, the unusual spectacle, of the attributes in one man, of the giant and of the child. It was the violet blooming at the foot of an oak !

Had the subject of these remarks been brought up to the bar, or had he been conducted by circumstances to senatorial life, he would, in my opinion, have been without a rival. None of the great jurists or orators who adorned the early part of this century would have equalled him. His memory, which was as capacious as his intellect, would have sustained, from its exhaustless stores, to the high purposes of such professions, his towering genius, and have left a Pitt, or a Plunkett, a Fox or a Curran, to have followed rather than to precede him in his wake. The elder Chatham was the only man who, in those days of distinguished statesmen, shadowed him forth in the senate of the realm. Robert Hall was formed by nature to direct and to sway the destinies of nations.

Any review of this eminent man which leaves out the chief character which he sustained through life, must be obviously most defective and incomplete, yet a descant on his claims as a preacher, neither becomes me nor the occasion. I shall simply therefore say, that the pulpit was never regarded by him as a place for display, as a platform from which to send forth the coruscations of his genius. His taste, his conscience, his piety forbade. A more humble being never trod the precincts of the sanctuary. He felt as the loftiest

creatures must ever do, his utter nothingness, when approaching the ineffable glory. But it was impossible for him to touch the great themes of the christian ministry, without occasionally catching their light and reflecting their grandeur. At such seasons, strangely endowed as he was, it is not surprising that he should have risen to unusual ardor, and seemed as if about to ascend from earth in a chariot of fire. "The persons," says his great contemporary, John Foster, at the close of his paper entitled "Observations on Mr. Hall's character as a preacher:"

"The persons who could see where Mr. Hall's rare excellence had a limit short of the ideal perfection of a preacher, would, by the same judgment, form the justest and the highest estimate of the offerings which, in his person, reason and genius consecrated to religion—of the force of evidence with which he maintained its doctrines, of the solemn energy with which he urged its obligations, and of the sublimity with which he displayed its relations and prospects.

"By those persons, the loss is reflected on with a sentiment peculiar to the event, never experienced before, nor to be expected in any future instance. The removal of any worthy minister, while in full possession and activity of his faculties, is a mournful occurrence; but there is the consideration that many such remain, and that perhaps an equal may follow where the esteemed instructor is withdrawn. But the feeling in the present instance is of a loss altogether irreparable. The cultivated portion of the hearers have a sense of privation partaking of desolateness. An animating influence that pervaded, and enlarged, and raised their minds, is extinct. While ready to give due honor to all valuable preachers, and knowing that the lights of religious instruction will still shine with useful lustre, and new ones continually rise, they involuntarily and pensively turn to look at the last fading colors in the distance where the greater luminary is set."

We may be disposed to think that nature is capricious in her gifts, partial in the more distinguished favors she throws

from her bounteous hand. Among the millions who people her ample realms, there are comparatively few, perhaps, who can lay claim to the high attribute of genius, to that special endowment which constitutes the most fascinating ornament of her sons. Yet a little reflection would convince us that it is unreasonable to suppose that the great law of variety which pervades the universe and gives to it more than half its beauty and its charm, should stop at the precincts of mind. That rule which reaches to the sands of the desert and the pebbles of the brook, which invests the ocean with its majesty and the heavens with their magnificence, might be expected to apply to a region greater than they—to spread through the immaterial creation indications of the exhaustless affluence of the Great Architect of all. A dull and unrelieved monotony in the higher department of things, would have looked as though there had been a limit to creative munificence and skill. But this law is as benign as it is profound, as conducive to the happiness of the creature as it is illustrative of the resources of the Creator. Had all men been similarly endowed, the sum of human felicity would have been incalculably diminished, the stimulus to exertion have been essentially weakened, and the interchange of mental offices have been utterly destroyed; indeed such a notion would obliterate for ever the distinction between the instinctive and the intelligent creation—angels and men must take rank with beavers and with bees. That freedom and independency which are the great foundations of rational natures required that those so enfranchised should be variously endued, that by friction and collision, by comparison and emulation, they might be prompted to increasing attainments and advancing knowledge. A dead level in mind would be the very maelstrom of all improvement. When therefore we are asked what are the uses of human genius, we enquire what are the advantages of the unequal distribution

of wealth? What the meaning of varied countenances in the physiology of our species? Or what of the undulations on the surface of nature? If the mountains have their mission, so have the vallies. If the rivulets have their embassy, so have the seas. If the soft evening zephyr have its destiny, so have the lightning and the storm. It is the province of genius to raise the standard of thought, to bear with it the key which unlocks the regions of fancy and of poetry, to shed the rays of its presence into the glens of darkness, of apathy and of ignorance, to beguile the plodding sons of time into the sunlight of beauty and of day. Who would wish to obliterate the pages of a Socrates or of a Plato, to hush the songs of a Virgil or of a Horace, or even to pluck up the mountain daisy of a Burns, or chase to death his rustic mouse? A leprosy on the hand which would dare to mutilate or attempt to destroy the monuments of that attribute which redeems from insipidity this plebeian world! Nor must it be forgotten, that genius is not confined to any class, but visits all the walks of life. It does not limit itself to the mansions of nobles, or to the palaces of kings, nor resort exclusively to our halls of science or our seats of learning. It may be found in the secluded village and in the crowded city; it sheds its rays on the sons of commerce and twines its wreaths for the child of toil. It is a plant of nature which flourishes in every clime, though apt to sicken and to droop beneath the relaxing gales of luxuriant ease. When it has sometimes faded in the higher places of the earth, it has sprung fresh and strong from the virgin soil and filled the very heavens with its fragrance. It would be easy to cite a host of men who, emerging from obscurity, have become the boast of our country and the admiration of the world. Genius from its very nature, and by the wise ordination of its Great Author, admits of no monopoly. And shall we envy others the possession of this precious gift? the rather let us recognize its claims,

walk in its light, and pay homage at its shrine, whether we meet it in the guise of poverty, or in the trappings of wealth, ever bearing in mind that great and glorious as it is, there is something better still. To fulfil with assiduity the duties of our several callings, to breast with fortitude the waves of care as they rise and roll around us, to cultivate the amenities of life, to cherish the virtues of temperance, probity, and kindness, to imbibe wisdom and strength from the perennial font of light and of purity, are achievements available to all, achievements without which the possession of the loftiest genius would only augment our responsibilities without multiplying our joys.

Alas ! how many cenotaphs, covered with ivy and darkened with the shade of the cypress, tell of fruitless and aimless genius. It is deplorable to think of the waste of energy, of talent, and of taste, which the annals of time record. Melancholy to contemplate eminently endowed minds, wearing the manacles of low and debasing habits. To witness a brilliant and distinguished spirit, rising above and setting below the limited horizon of things, without shedding a single genial ray in its course, passing like a meteor across a midnight sky. It was the crowning glory of the genius of Robert Hall, that it was devoted to the holiest service and directed to the greatest ends. He begun, pursued, and closed his public career, in reverential obedience to those great laws, mental, social and moral, which are incumbent alike on the lowliest and the loftiest minds, revolving steadily in his appointed orbit round the Infinite centre of all created intelligence and good. He was with us as a great high priest, wearing his august robes, meekly and incessantly ministering at the altar of humanity, of reason, and of religion ; and now that he is gone, we derive from the vast and varied powers he possessed, an argument in favor of that immortality to which the christian faith, of which he was at once an humble disciple

and an able defender, so steadily and benignly points. That is a wretched theory, as repulsive as it is irrational, which would reduce man to a level with the brute, close the vista which opens out to the distance of eternity, reduce the great Saviour of the world to a myth, and impiously expel the Deity from the sublime temple of the universe! No! man (these impugnors of our honor and of our dignity notwithstanding,) is endowed with noble faculties, is summoned to great and mighty deeds, and has before him a vast and endless destiny. In this firm belief and holy assurance, let it be ours to tread, however unequally, in the footsteps of the thoughtful, the pious, the illustrious dead.

